

AMERICAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION



Find a Dentist |



Seal Program |



Contact Us |

DENTAL PROFESSIONALS

THE ADA

YOUR ORAL HEALTH

[Animations & Games](#)[Events & News](#)[Manage Your
Oral Health](#)[Media Press Room](#)[Students
& Teachers](#)[Topics & Resources](#)[GLOSSARY OF TERMS](#)[HISTORY OF DENTISTRY](#)[ORAL HEALTH LINKS](#)[ORAL HEALTH TOPICS](#)

ORAL HEALTH TOPICS A-Z

MOUTHGUARDS

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- [Do I need a mouth protector?](#)
- [What are the advantages of using a mouth protector?](#)
- [Are there different types of mouth protectors?](#)
- [I wear braces. Can I use a mouth protector?](#)

Do I need a mouth protector?

Anyone who participates in a sport that carries a significant risk of injury should wear a mouth protector. This includes a wide range of sports like football, hockey, basketball, baseball, gymnastics, and volleyball.

Mouth protectors, which typically cover the upper teeth, can cushion a blow to the face, minimizing the risk of broken teeth and injuries to the soft tissues of the mouth. If you wear braces or another fixed dental appliance on your lower jaw, your dentist may suggest a mouth protector for these teeth as well.

[Return to Top](#)

What are the advantages of using a mouth protector?

Accidents can happen during any physical activity. A mouth protector can help cushion a blow to the face that otherwise might result in an injury to the mouth. A misdirected elbow in a one-on-one basketball game or a spill off a bicycle can leave you with chipped or broken teeth, nerve damage to a tooth or even tooth loss. A mouth protector can limit the risk of such injuries as well as protect the soft tissues of your tongue, lips and cheek lining.

A properly fitted mouth protector will stay in place while you are wearing it, making it easy for you to talk and breathe.

[Return to Top](#)

Are there different types of mouth protectors?

There are three types of mouth protectors:

1. **Stock**
Stock mouth protectors are inexpensive and come pre-formed, ready to wear. Unfortunately, they often don't fit very well. They can be bulky and can make breathing and talking difficult.
2. **Boil and bite**
Boil and bite mouth protectors also can be bought at many sporting goods stores and may offer a better fit than stock mouth protectors. They should be softened in water, then inserted and allowed to adapt to the shape of your mouth. If you don't follow the directions carefully you can wind up with a poor-fitting mouth protector.
3. **Custom-fitted**

Custom-fitted mouth protectors are made by your dentist for you personally. They are more expensive than the other versions, but because they are customized they can offer a better fit than anything you can buy off the shelf.

[Return to Top](#)

I wear braces. Can I use a mouth protector?

A properly fitted mouth protector may be especially important for people who wear braces or have fixed bridge work. A blow to the face could damage the brackets or other fixed orthodontic appliances. A mouth protector also provides a barrier between the braces and your cheek or lips, limiting the risk of soft tissue injuries.

Talk to your dentist or orthodontist about selecting a mouth protector that will provide the best protection. Although mouth protectors typically only cover the upper teeth, your dentist or orthodontist may suggest that you use a mouth protector on the lower teeth if you have braces on these teeth too.

If you have a retainer or other removable appliance, do not wear it during any contact sports.

[Return to Top](#)

Contact Information:

Consumer Questions: [E-mail us](#)

Please note: The ADA does not provide specific answers to individual questions about fees, dental problems, conditions, diagnoses, treatments or proposed treatments, or requests for research. Information about dental referrals, complaints and a variety of dental procedures [may be found here](#). Please refer to our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page before submitting an e-mail.

[Quick Links](#)



[Manage Your Oral Health: Dental Emergencies](#)

Copyright 1995-2004 American Dental Association.
Reproduction or republication strictly prohibited without prior written permission.
See [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Use](#) for further legal information.